n condos.
l on May 13, the day Brazil was
rating the 100th anniversary of the
tion of slavery, da Silva answered
oor to the official driver who was to
her to the presidential palace.
e was greeted with: "Tell your mis-
s the car is downstairs."
n television news, blacks appear al-
t exclusively as soccer players, carni-
dancers, shantytown dwellers or sus-
ted criminals. Political, government

a cultural one," says MNU ...
Roberto da Silva. "Our aim is to spread black consciousness."

For da Silva, the recovery of black heroes from the past is a crucial step in the struggle for awareness. He would like to see Dalmao Lima, who led a slaves revolt in the mid-1800s, earn a place in Brazilian history books.

Black activists are also encouraging

Since 1985, it has ...
African capitals and now trades with 39 African countries.

However, there are still no black diplomats in Brazil's service.

"Here in Brazil," says Riveira, "racial prejudice continues to flourish, despite being officially outlawed."

SOUTHAM NEWS

POLLUTION

Getting tough over sensitivity

By Tom Spears Toronto Star

Chris Brown is a rebel without applause.

In political committee rooms and bureaucrats' offices, he preaches about a better world, one that could be kinder to people beaten down by chemicals that most of us don't even notice.

Doctors have recognized for many years that low-level pollution can affect the health — including the mental health — of some people.

The problem, Brown says, is that governments haven't done enough to spread this news, and have sometimes dismissed the whole problem as psychosomatic.

As a crusader for the rights of people with "environmental sensitivity," he's on the phone constantly: to federal and provincial health ministries, to coroners, to psychiatrists, to groups of environmentally sensitive people and, as often as not, to The Star.

QUIT JOB

Brown, 39, is a former CBC reporter in Ottawa who quit his job when his own sensitivities got in the way of it.

Different people react in different ways to chemical assaults. Brown found that tobacco smoke (still tough to avoid in many newsrooms) destroyed his ability to put thoughts into words.

Other people react to ordinary cleaning products, food additives, even perfume.

Some patients, Brown says, have been diagnosed as "crackers" and confined to psychiatric hospitals.

He says some have committed suicide, partly through lack of support from government and the medical community.

Now, he is campaigning to ensure psychiatrists in future check that patients won't be treated for mental illness when they suffer from exposure to the chemicals in their food, air or water.

What he *really* wants, he says, is for some health minister, somewhere, to stand up and make a lot of noise about the problems of these patients.

"It's not a health story," he says. "It's a social justice story. To me, the issue is that people got trashed for no reason."

He was rewarded last month with a letter from the Psychiatric Patients' Advocacy Office of Ontario's health ministry, asking that the province's 10 psychiatric hospitals "consider central nervous system response to environmental toxins as a possible cause of . . . symptoms."

The letter to the ministry's psychiatric hospitals branch also urges doctors to let patients who do react to pollutants be treated in clean rooms and sent to clean homes afterwards.

Another victory is a decision by the Royal Ottawa Hospital, Ottawa's main psychiatric hospital, to set up a committee to spread information within the hospital about the environmental problem.

His persistent, aggressive approach hasn't won Brown a lot of friends in government. He has, after all, accused former health and welfare minister Jake Epp of ignoring an important health issue and allowing people who react to pollution to be "trashed."

"Trashed" and "crackers" are words he uses a lot. They don't endear him to bureaucrats. Mention Brown to health and welfare officials and a reporter gets the kid-glove treatment.

Yes, the ministry agrees that environmental sensitivity is a legitimate medical problem. No, Mr. Epp hasn't avoided the issue. (Perrin Beatty is now minister, anyway.) No, they don't agree that their department is guilty of "stonewalling and evasion."

And no, no, *no*, they wouldn't care to venture an opinion about Mr. Brown.

Brown keeps hammering at them, publicly and privately. He's still upset about the publication in 1985 in the Canadian Medical Association Journal of work by a doctor, who concluded all 18 of the patients in the study suffered psychosomatic illness not caused by pollution.

Brown claims health and welfare relied for some time on what he calls the "crackers" theory that the trouble was all in the patients' heads.

"Health and welfare officials repeatedly labelled (patients) as deluded, suffering psychosomatic symptoms as a result of psychological stress," he told a House of Commons committee last year.

DEVASTATING EFFECT

"The statements had a devastating effect on people's lives," he says. "Families broke up, professional reputations were ruined, careers ended, and the resulting frustration led to several suicides."

That was the beginning of his connection with Ontario's chief coroner's office.

He tried unsuccessfully to persuade the chief coroner to call an inquest into one suicide by a man with environmental problems, and is now waiting to see whether there will be an inquest into a second suicide that occurred in June.

In that case a Timmins man shot himself. Brown claims the man was despondent because he couldn't work and had been refused a disability pension because a doctor wouldn't recognize his sensitivity to pollutants.

So far there has been no decision on whether to hold an inquest.

Brown is also waiting to see whether any level of government will take steps to help patients who have been diagnosed as mentally ill because of their reaction to pollution.